

VZCZCXRO4289
OO RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHROV RUEHSR
DE RUEHAK #1584/01 2471314
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 031314Z SEP 08
FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7338
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 001584

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/02/2028

TAGS: [PREL](#) [RU](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: TURKISH MFA ON LAVROV TALKS, BURNS VISIT

REF: MOSCOW 2629

Classified By: AMBASSADOR ROSS WILSON FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

[11](#). (C) Summary: Turkish MFA U/S Apakan briefed Ambassador September 2 regarding FM Babacan's talks with Russian FM Lavrov the same day in Istanbul. Babacan reportedly emphasized that Russia's recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia contradicts international law; associated Turkey with the stance taken by NATO and its EU partners on the crisis; and defended Ankara's implementation of the Montreux Convention. Lavrov was apparently conciliatory and sought to convey Russia's lack of concern that anything has changed at all. Apakan somewhat defensively recounted Turkey's early actions in the Georgia crisis and welcomed the September 5 visit by U/S Burns to better coordinate future strategy on a range of issues. End Summary.

Talks with Lavrov

[12](#). (C) According to Apakan, FM Babacan used a long tete-a-tete with FM Lavrov to make clear where Turkey and Russia differ. He said that whatever the logic behind Russia's actions against President Saakashvili's Georgia, Turkey does not understand or accept Russia's South Ossetia/Abkhazia recognition, which contradicts international law. Babacan stressed Ankara's support for Georgia's territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence, and he called for full implementation of the Sarkozy/Medvedev Six Point agreement. He also fully associated Turkey with recent NATO statements, as well as that September 1 by the EU.

[13](#). (C) Lavrov seemed to be mostly in diplomatic and conciliatory mode, trying his hardest, Apakan suggested, to register Russian complaints toward Turkey in a mild way, but also to convey that Russia does not believe anything significant has changed as a result of Georgia. Apakan made clear Turkey was not convinced. For example, Lavrov claimed that Russia "had no choice" but to recognize the breakaway regions, which argument Babacan rejected. Lavrov did not repeat Russian invective about Saakashvili, except to note that the Georgians "deserve a better leader." In response to Babacan questions, he indicated there is no change in Russia's approach on the Iran nuclear issue, Afghanistan, the Middle East or Iraq. He downplayed the impact of decisions by NATO and EU on relations with Russia; these organizations had sought those relations in the first place, so any changes were their problem.

[14](#). (C) The Russians said that they believe there "needs to be a common understanding" of how the Montreux Convention is implemented. Babacan rebuffed the complaint; Ankara has fulfilled and will continue to fulfill its Montreux obligations. Apakan advised that the day before the Babacan/Lavrov meeting, Turkish and Russian Naval commanders met at the latter's request in the Black Sea. The topics were Montreux implementation and Operation Black Sea Harmony, and the meeting followed a Russian note verbale August 29 objecting to the USS Mount Whitney's passage through the

Turkish Straits on the grounds that it exceeds Montreux tonnage limits -- which complaint the Turkish MFA dismissed. Apakan indicated that the Turkish commander similarly declined to accept the suggestion Turkey had done anything wrong or inappropriate in implementing Montreux. Apakan advised Ambassador that there will be no change in Turkey's stance with respect to US ship transits and the USS Mount Whitney transit should proceed as planned.

15. (C) Turkish media indicate that there may have been some discussion of trade issues. Turkish shipments arriving at Novorossiysk and other Russian ports of entry have reportedly encountered significant delays in recent weeks. Apakan declined to provide specifics on these bilateral matters, but did note a Turkish Council of Ministers discussion a day earlier that walked back public threats of retaliation made by Foreign Trade Minister Tuzmen.

Burns Visit -----

16. (C) Ambassador advised Apakan of plans by U/S Burns to visit Ankara for talks on the afternoon of September 5. While we understand FM Babacan will be out of the country, we would like for Burns to see President Gul, PM Erdogan, U/S Apakan and his team, and possibly President/PM foreign affairs advisor Davutoglu. Apakan welcomed the Burns visit as a chance to continue the Structured Dialogue agreed upon by foreign ministers in 2006. Besides Georgia, Armenia, the Caucasus and Russia, Turkey looks forward also to discussing Iraq, Iran, the Middle East, Afghanistan and South Asia, Cyprus and the Balkans.

ANKARA 00001584 002 OF 002

17. (C) As he had during other conversations in recent days, Apakan then went into a long, somewhat defensive recounting of recent developments and Turkey's stances. He said there should be no misunderstanding of the top priority Turkey attaches to its relationship with the US. Also important are relations with the EU, solidarity with Georgia, ties with Russia and Turkey's regional role, but the US connection is number one. Turkey is grateful for US help on the PKK and, of course, this should affect how the Turks deal with the US on our priorities and requests for help. Turkey must approach US straits passage requests within the context of Montreux, but it has and will continue to work with us to make these happen. In the same spirit it agreed to US intelligence assistance requests.

18. (C) Ambassador replied that some of Turkey's initial responses to our requests had not been well-received in the US, but we appreciate our more effective work together on straits transit and intelligence-related requests over the past 1-2 weeks. On these and other issues, the objective when U/S Burns visits should be less to rehash history and more to talk through our perspectives and strategies looking ahead. For example, we need to talk through what the "no business as usual" decision that NATO and its member states took means, how exactly we can best support Georgia, how Turkey's new opening to Yerevan fits into the bigger picture, etc. Ditto on Iraq, especially post-Strategic Framework Agreement, and on Iran. Differences or the appearance of differences undermine our common objectives, and our coordination can minimize these.

Visit Ankara's Classified Web Site at
[http://www.intelink.sgov.gov/wiki/Portal:Turk ey](http://www.intelink.sgov.gov/wiki/Portal:Turk%20ey)

WILSON